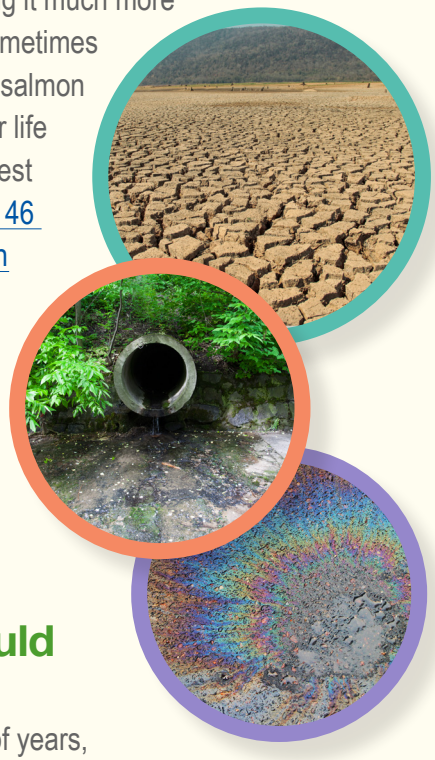
What is happening?

Salmon, like people, need healthy habitats to thrive. Habitat loss, passage barriers, drought, and runoff are making it much more difficult—and sometimes impossible—for salmon to complete their life cycle. On the West Coast, 28 out of 46 stocks of salmon and steelhead are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.



Why should we care?

For thousands of years, salmon have played a vital role in cultures and economies around the world. Salmon are also a vital link in many food webs and a keystone species in many different ecosystems.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Scoop the Poop

Be sure to scoop pet waste before rain washes harmful bacteria into nearby waterways.

Keep Salmon Off Drugs

Instead of flushing old medicines down the toilet, bring them to a drug take-back program.

Use Commercial Car Washes

Commercial car washes use minimal water and remove pollutants—such as motor oil, antifreeze, and brake pad dust—before wastewater is discharged.

Scan the QR Code to learn more.

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

West Coast Region

NOAA FISHERIES

I'm counting on you!

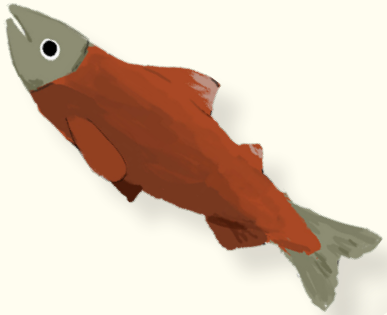
Learn how to be a salmon steward.

Illustration: Anke Gladnick

SALMON LIFE CYCLE

❼ Spawner

Upon reaching their natal home stream, females build nests in the gravel. The dominant male will court a female and she will lay her eggs in the nest while the male will fertilize them with milt (sperm). The female covers the nest with loose gravel and moves upstream to prepare another nest. After completing their quest, most salmon die within a few days. Nutrients from their decomposing bodies will fertilize the streamside and neighboring forest, ultimately nourishing the next generation.



❻ Migrating Adult

When adults are ready to spawn, they are guided home by the smells of their home stream. Once they reach freshwater, they stop eating and lose their silver color. They must overcome rapids, waterfalls, dams, predators, and anglers along the way. The males of some species develop a hooked snout, humped back, and elongated teeth.

❶ Egg

Under the gravel, thousands of eggs develop in nests called redds.

❷ Alevin

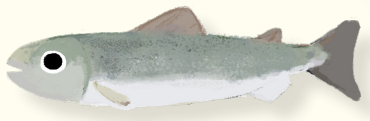
Alevin hatch and remain under the gravel for protection against predators. Once they have absorbed their yolk sac, they become fry.

❸ Fry

Fry head for protected spots, like under logs and behind boulders. They dart out to catch tiny insects that come their way.

❺ Ocean Adult

Salmon enter the ocean as juveniles and leave as mature adults. In the ocean, salmon travel thousands of miles and feed on other fish, squid, eels, and shrimp. Depending on the species, they will stay at sea for up to seven years.



❹ Smolt

When they feel the urge, young salmon migrate toward estuaries where they begin adapting to saltwater. This process is called smoltification.

Scan the QR code to watch a salmon life cycle animation.

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